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Wetherbee

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(54) **SELF-EXPLORATION THERAPEUTIC ASSEMBLY AND METHOD**

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Related U.S. Application Data

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

G09B 19/00	(2006.01)
A41G 1/00	(2006.01)
G09B 1/02	(2006.01)
G09F 19/08	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***G09B 19/00*** (2013.01); ***A41G 1/00*** (2013.01); ***A41G 1/001*** (2013.01); ***A41G 1/002*** (2013.01); ***G09B 1/02*** (2013.01); *G09F 2019/083* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A41G 1/002; A41G 1/001; A41G 1/00; G09F 2019/083
USPC 434/236–238
See application file for complete search history.

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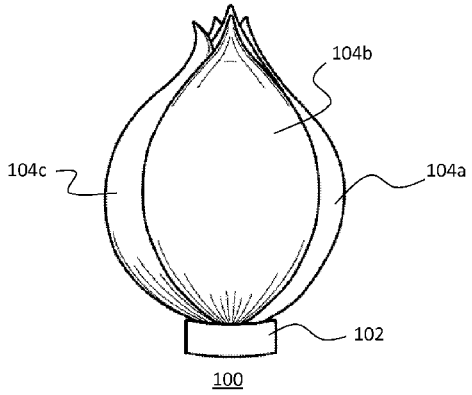
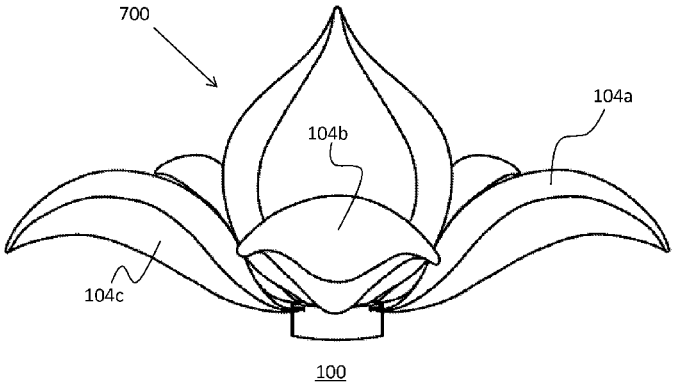
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A self-exploration assembly includes a base and a plurality of layers each shaped so that when the plurality of layers are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of layers together resemble a bulbous shape, and, when the plurality of layers are coupled to the base in a second orientation, the plurality of petals resemble a flower shape.

20 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets





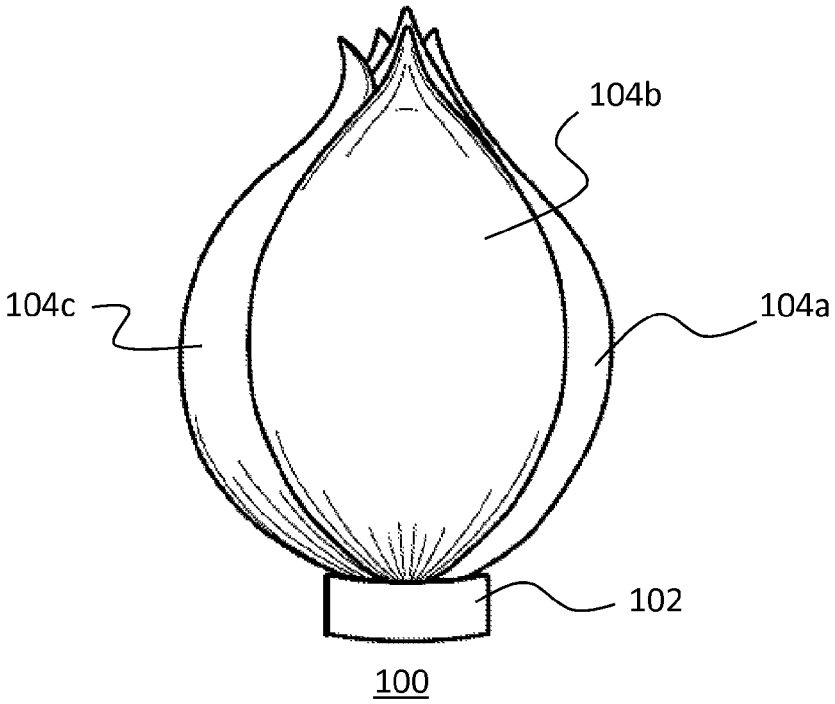


FIG. 1

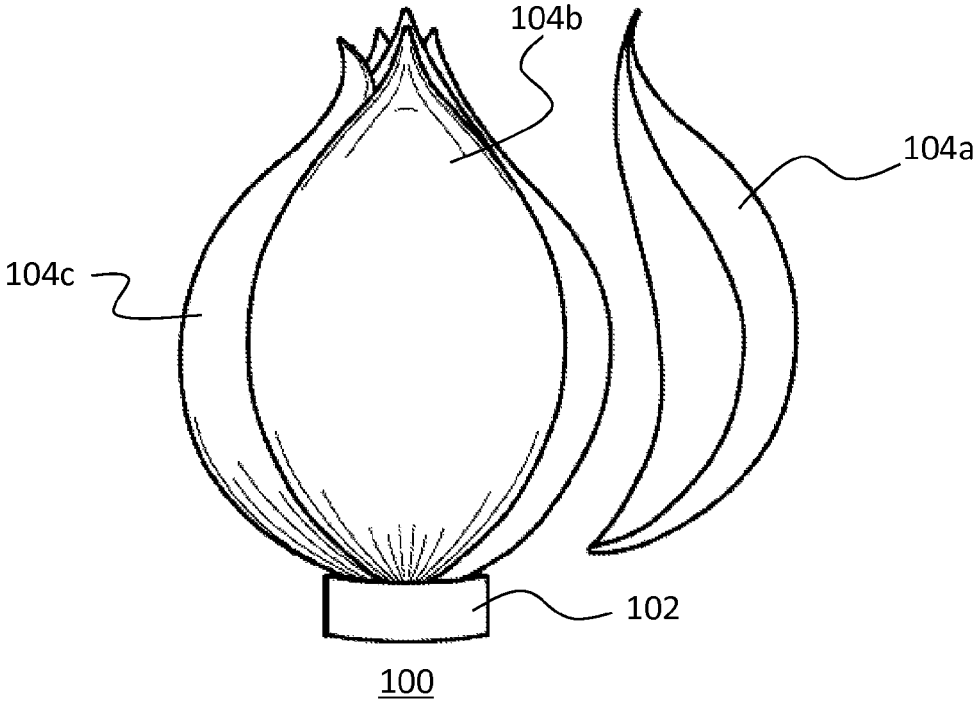


FIG. 2

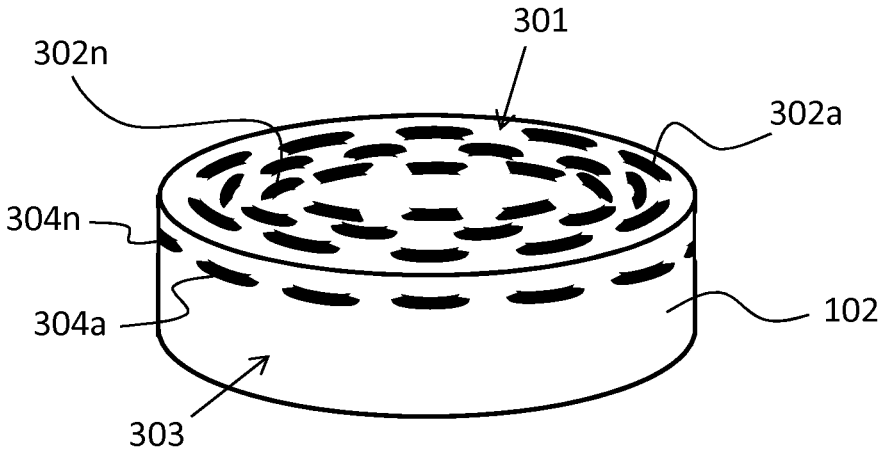
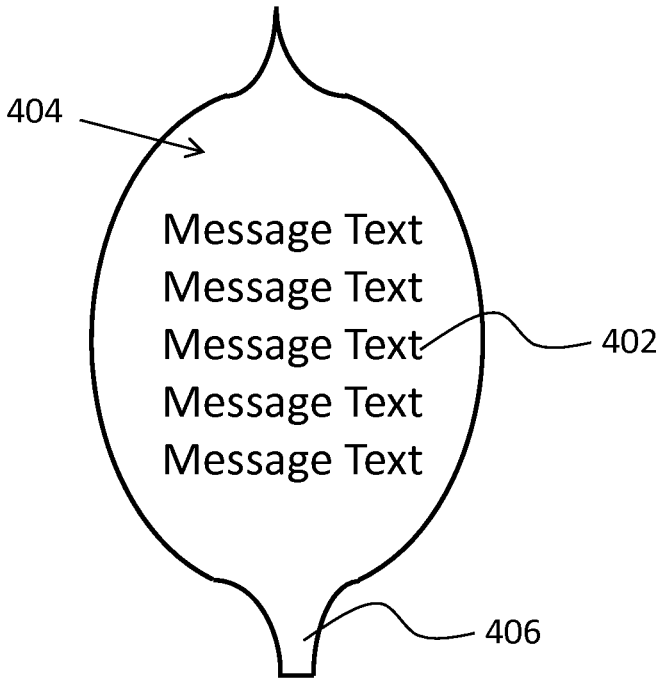


FIG. 3



104a

FIG. 4

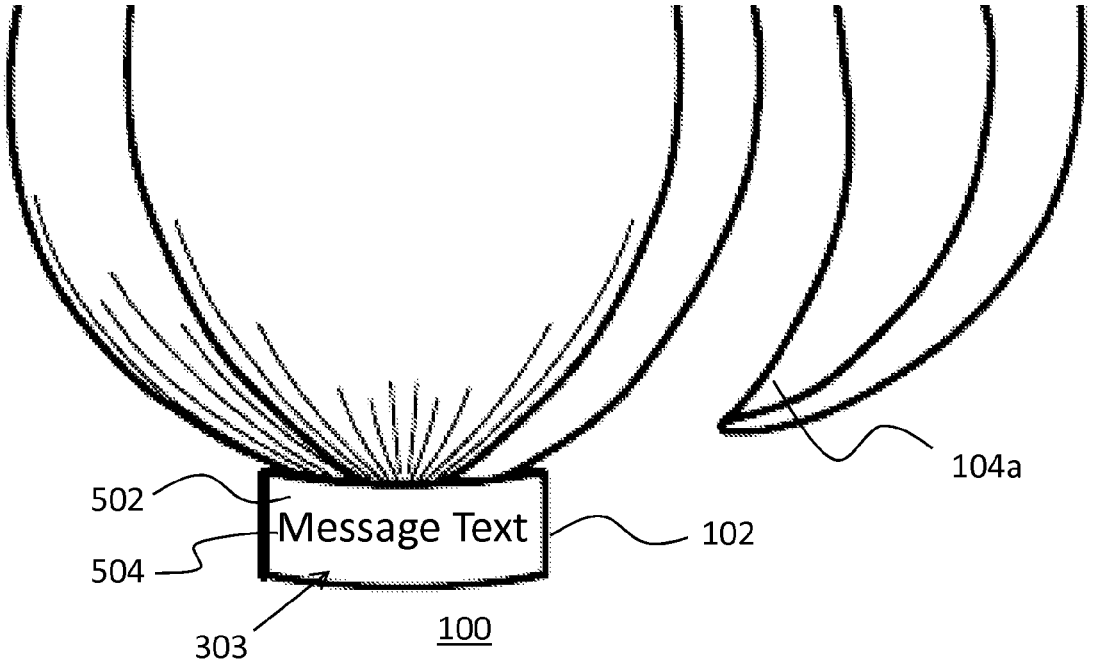

104a
502
Message Text
102
504
303
100

FIG. 5

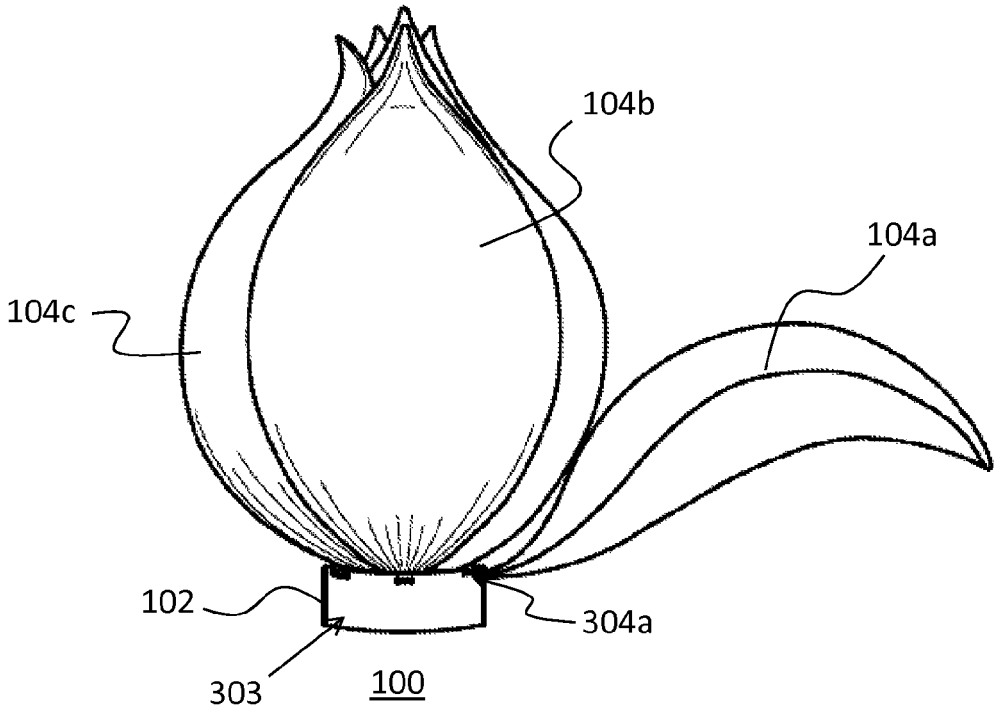

104b
104a
104c
102
304a
303
100

FIG. 6

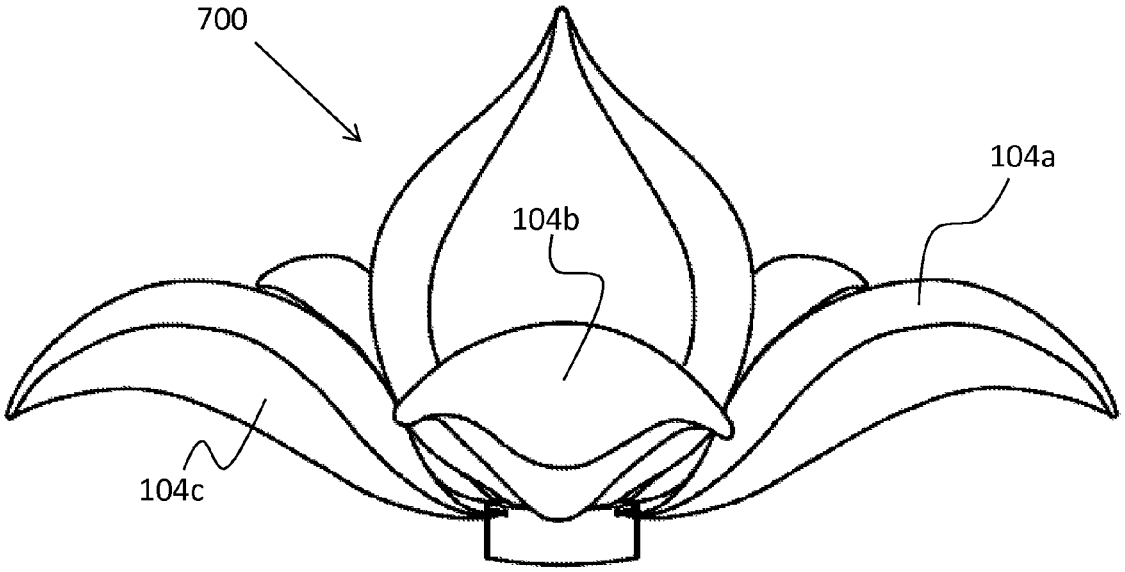

700
104a
104b
104c
100

FIG. 7

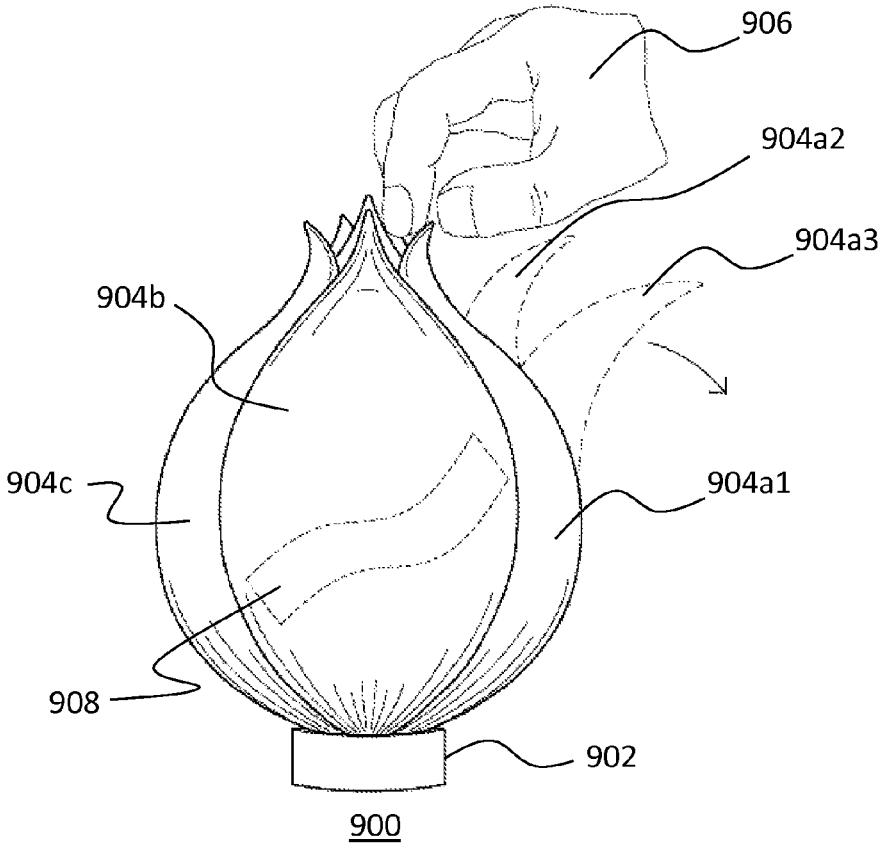

906
904a2
904a3
904b
904c
904a1
908
902
900

FIG. 9

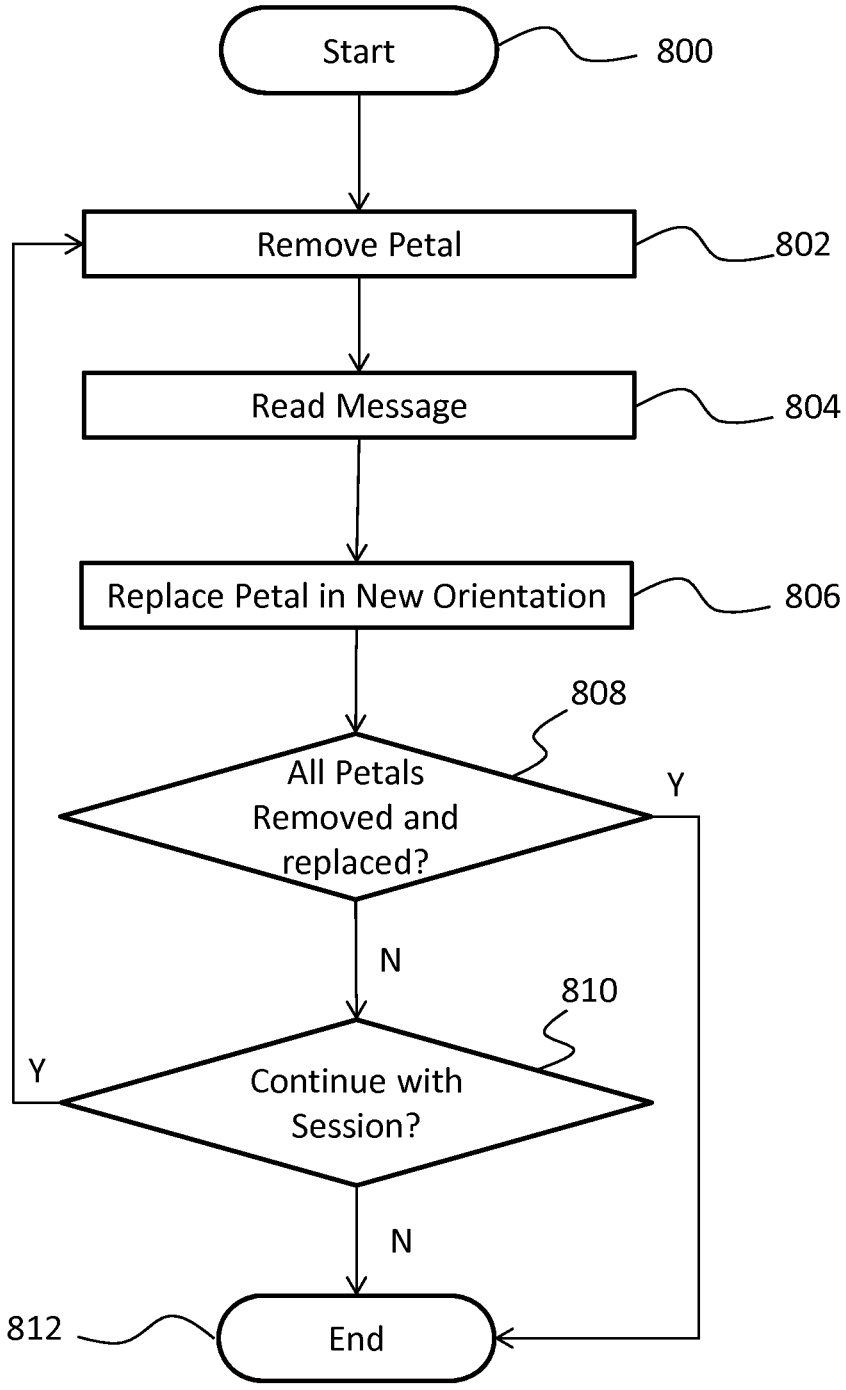

Start
800
Remove Petal
802
Read Message
804
Replace Petal in New Orientation
806
808
All Petals Removed and replaced?
Y
N
810
Continue with Session?
Y
N
812
End

FIG. 8

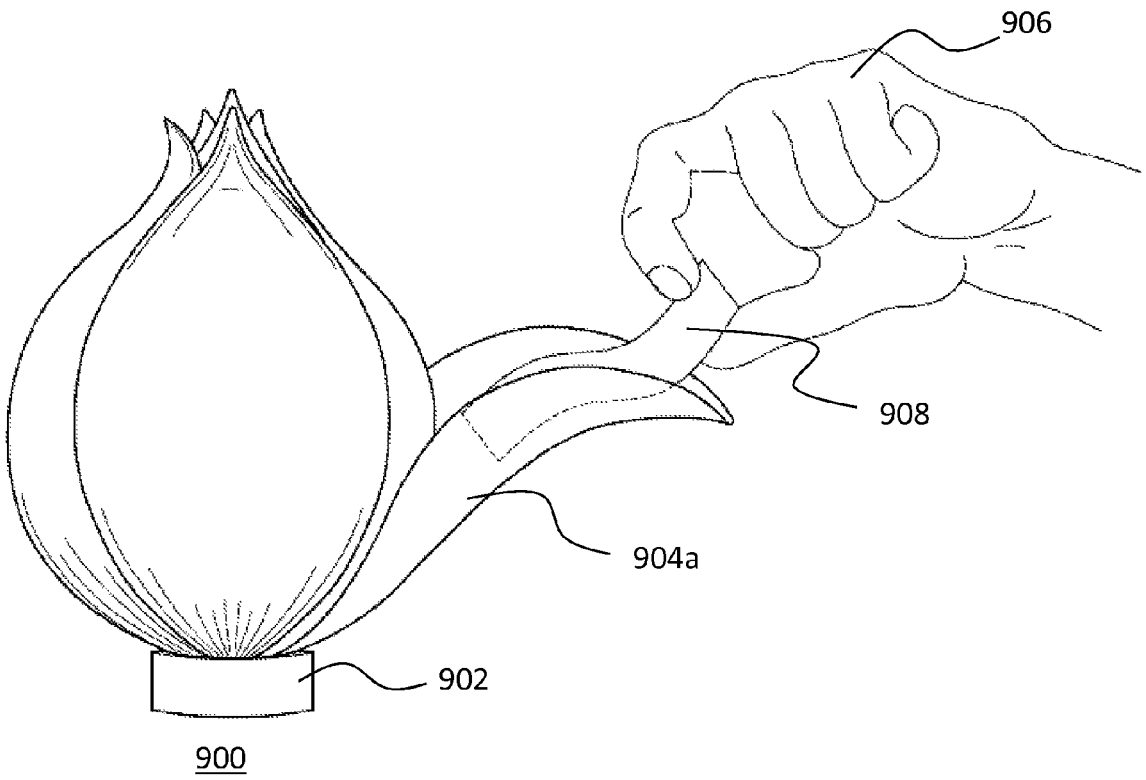


FIG. 10

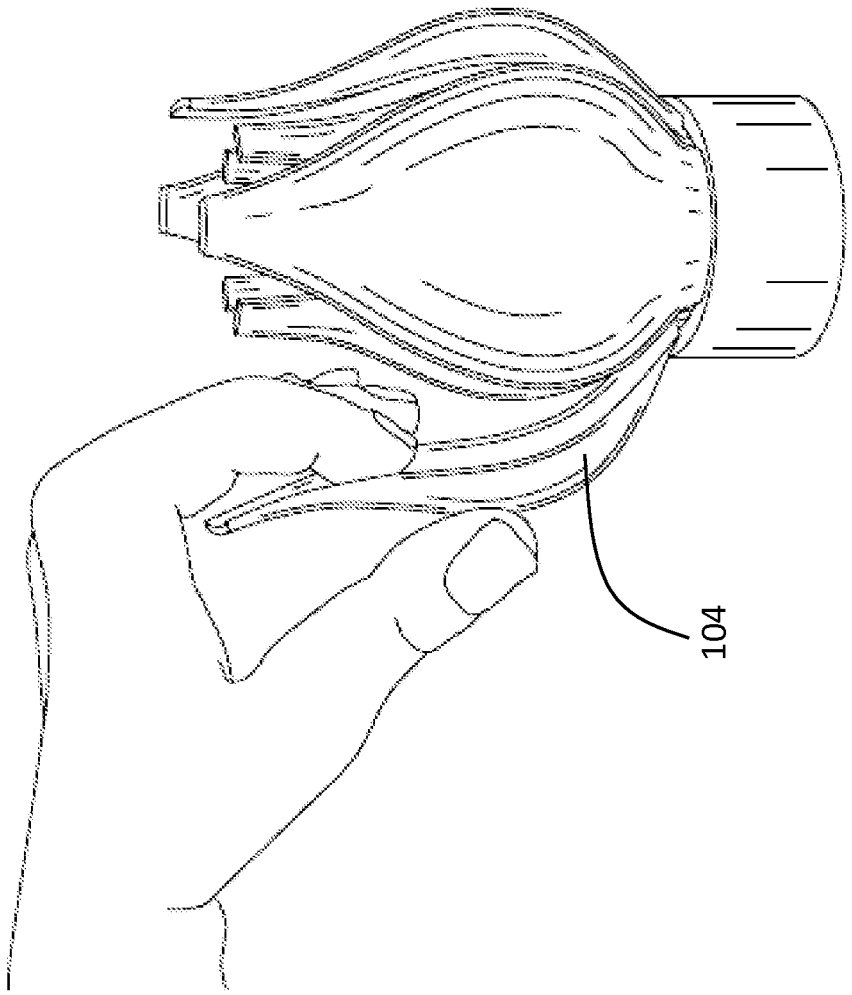


FIG. 11

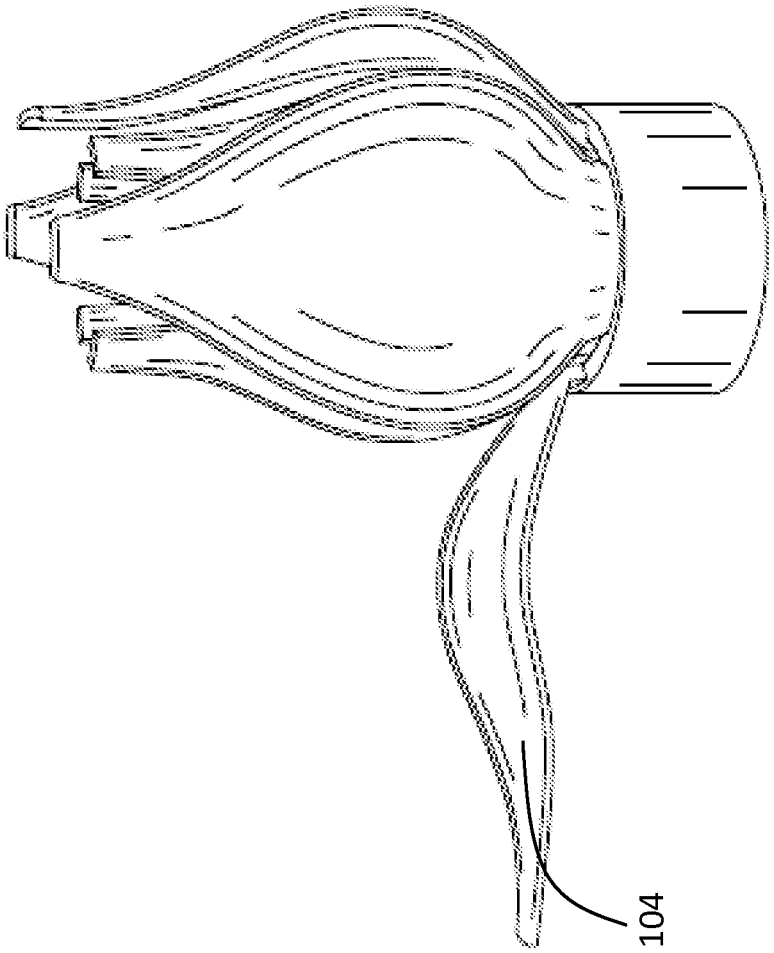


FIG. 12

SELF-EXPLORATION THERAPEUTIC ASSEMBLY AND METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This Non-provisional Utility Application is a Continuation-in-part Application, which claims the benefit of co-pending U.S. Non-provisional patent application Ser. No. 13/187,408, filed on Jul. 20, 2011, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to mental health therapy and, more particularly, relates to a manually configurable assembly that leads a user along a path of self exploration where the assembly systematically changes shape during use.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Although there are many situations where individuals face mental barriers that keep him or her from doing what they should or would like to be doing or feeling, to date, no therapy has been shown to be completely effective. Examples of mental barriers include depression, addiction, obsessions, compulsions, mental disorders, and many more. Individuals suffering with one or more of these co-occurring disorders often feel helpless to overcome them, even though that may be far from the truth.

Over the years, therapists have developed many methods for assisting individuals in realizing that they have the ability to overcome the conditions that are negatively affecting their lives. Many of these therapies are focused on encouraging the individual to look at and think about themselves in a way that they have not in the past. These therapies are often referred to as self-exploration therapies.

Several such self-exploration therapies involve systematically inspiring the individual to contemplate certain aspects of themselves, their lives, their past, their future, aspects of others individuals, and many topics. These self-exploration topics are most frequently presented in list form in, for example, a book. Working through lists is frequently found to be unexciting and does not necessarily provide a goal that the participant can visualize. For this reason, many persons are unsuccessful in completing the list.

Numerous self-improvement programs teach a theoretical "onion" concept, where the participant figuratively systematically peels away layers of themselves before they can arrive at the root of the issue. However, figuratively performing therapies makes it easy to lose focus and is not as rewarding as physically manipulating an object. Peeling an actual onion, as is well known, is messy and causes eye irritation.

Therefore, a need exists to overcome the problems with the prior art as discussed above.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention provides a self-exploration therapeutic assembly that overcomes the hereinafore-mentioned disadvantages of the heretofore-known devices and methods of this general type and that presents a physical model of an onion with individual layers that can be removed to reveal a therapeutic message or exercise and replaced in a reverse orientation, whereby when all or several of the petals have been reversed, the model resembles a flower.

With the foregoing and other objects in view, there is provided, in accordance with the invention, a self-exploration assembly that includes a base and a plurality of petals each shaped so that when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of petals together resemble an onion, and, when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a second orientation, the plurality of petals resemble a flower.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the first orientation is substantially between a 90 degree and a 180 degree rotation from the second orientation.

In accordance with yet another feature of the present invention, each of the plurality of petals comprises a message on at least one surface thereof.

In accordance with one more feature of the present invention, the base includes a plurality of receiving areas, each receiving area shaped to accept a portion of one of the plurality of petals.

In accordance with a feature of the present invention, the base includes an upper surface having a first group of the plurality of receiving areas and a side surface having a second group of the plurality of receiving areas.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the second orientation includes a first group of the plurality of petals coupled to the first group of the plurality of receiving areas and a second group of the plurality of petals coupled to the second group of the plurality of receiving areas.

In accordance with another feature of the present invention, a first one of the receiving areas defines a first longitudinal axis and a second one of the receiving areas defines a second longitudinal axis, the second longitudinal axis being in a different plane than the first longitudinal axis.

In accordance with yet another feature of the present invention, the plurality of petals have a first shape when in the first orientation and a second shape different from the first shape when in the second orientation.

In accordance with another feature, an embodiment of the present invention includes a base defining a plurality of receiving areas and a plurality of petals each having a securing member shaped to couple to one of the plurality of receiving areas and each shaped so that when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of petals together resemble an onion, and, when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a second orientation substantially opposite the first orientation, the plurality of petals resemble a flower.

In accordance with another feature, an embodiment of the present invention includes a method of conducting self-discovery, where the method includes providing a base and a plurality of petals each shaped so that when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of petals together resemble an onion, and, when the plurality of petals are coupled to the base in a second orientation, the plurality of petals resemble a flower. The method further includes coupling each of the plurality of petals to the base in the first orientation, selectively removing a first one of the plurality of petals from the base, reading a message coupled to the first one of the plurality of petals, and coupling the first one of the plurality of petals to the base in the second orientation.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the method further includes selectively removing a second one of the plurality of petals from the base, reading a message coupled to the second one of the plurality of petals; and coupling the second one of the plurality of petals to the base in the second orientation.

In accordance with another feature, an embodiment of the present invention includes a self-exploration assembly comprising a plurality of layers, each shaped so that when the plurality of layers are in a first orientation, the plurality of layers together are in a closed configuration resembling a first shape, and, when the plurality of layers are in a second orientation, the plurality of layers are in an open configuration resembling a second shape; and a base, wherein the plurality of layers are coupled to the base so a transition from the first orientation to the second orientation is manual.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, each of the plurality of layers is comprised of a writable material.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the first shape is a bulbous shape and the second shape is a flower shape.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the first shape is an onion shape and the second shape is a flower shape.

In accordance with another feature, an embodiment of the present invention includes a self-exploration assembly comprising a base; and a plurality of movable membranes coupled to the base, each movable membrane shaped so that when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of movable membranes together resemble a bulbous shape, and, when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a second orientation, the plurality of movable membranes resemble a flower shape; and wherein a transition from the first orientation to the second orientation is one movable membrane at a time.

In accordance with yet another feature, an embodiment of the present invention includes a method of conducting self-discovery, the method comprising steps of obtaining an assembly comprising a base; and a plurality of movable membranes coupled to the base, each movable membrane shaped so that when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of movable membranes together resemble a bulbous shape, and, when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a second orientation, the plurality of movable membranes resemble a flower shape; and manually moving a first one of the plurality of movable membranes from the first orientation to the second orientation one movable membrane at a time.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the method further includes selectively removing the first one of the plurality of movable membranes from the base; and coupling the first one of the plurality of movable membranes to the base in the second orientation.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the method further includes manually moving further comprises the step of rotating the first one of the plurality of movable membranes from the first orientation to the second orientation.

In accordance with a further feature of the present invention, the method further includes writing a message on a first side of the first one of the plurality of movable membranes.

Although the invention is illustrated and described herein as embodied in a self-exploration therapeutic assembly, it is, nevertheless, not intended to be limited to the details shown because various modifications and structural changes may be made therein without departing from the spirit of the invention and within the scope and range of equivalents of the claims. Additionally, well-known elements of exemplary embodiments of the invention will not be described in detail or will be omitted so as not to obscure the relevant details of the invention.

Other features that are considered as characteristic for the invention are set forth in the appended claims. As required, detailed embodiments of the present invention are disclosed herein; however, it is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention, which can be embodied in various forms. Therefore, specific structural and functional details disclosed herein are not to be interpreted as limiting, but merely as a basis for the claims and as a representative basis for teaching one of ordinary skill in the art to variously employ the present invention in virtually any appropriately detailed structure. Further, the terms and phrases used herein are not intended to be limiting; but rather, to provide an understandable description of the invention. While the specification concludes with claims defining the features of the invention that are regarded as novel, it is believed that the invention will be better understood from a consideration of the following description in conjunction with the drawing figures, in which like reference numerals are carried forward. The figures of the drawings are not drawn to scale.

Before the present invention is disclosed and described, it is to be understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only and is not intended to be limiting. The terms "a" or "an," as used herein, are defined as one or more than one. The term "plurality," as used herein, is defined as two or more than two. The term "another," as used herein, is defined as at least a second or more. The terms "including" and/or "having," as used herein, are defined as comprising (i.e., open language). The term "coupled," as used herein, is defined as connected, although not necessarily directly, and not necessarily mechanically.

As used herein, the terms "about" or "approximately" apply to all numeric values, whether or not explicitly indicated. These terms generally refer to a range of numbers that one of skill in the art would consider equivalent to the recited values (i.e., having the same function or result). In many instances these terms may include numbers that are rounded to the nearest significant figure. In this document, the term "longitudinal" should be understood to mean in a direction corresponding to an elongated direction of the portion of the base, e.g., a receiving area, that couples to the petals. The terms "program," "software application," and the like as used herein, are defined as a sequence of instructions designed for execution on a computer system. A "program," "computer program," or "software application" may include a subroutine, a function, a procedure, an object method, an object implementation, an executable application, an applet, a servlet, a source code, an object code, a shared library/dynamic load library and/or other sequence of instructions designed for execution on a computer system. The term "recognizable shape," as used herein, is intended to refer to a shape that is non-random and identifiable to members of the general population.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying figures, where like reference numerals refer to identical or functionally similar elements throughout the separate views and which together with the detailed description below are incorporated in and form part of the specification, serve to further illustrate various embodiments and explain various principles and advantages all in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **1** is a side elevational view of a self-exploration therapeutic assembly that resembles an onion, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a side elevational view of a the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1**, with a petal separated, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of a base of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1**, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **4** is an elevational view of petal with a message attached, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **5** is a partial close-up elevational view of a self-exploration therapeutic assembly with a display for displaying messages, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **6** is a side elevational view of a the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1** with the separated petal of FIG. **2** attached to the base in a second orientation, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1** with several petals attached to the base in a second orientation so that the self-exploration therapeutic assembly resembles a flower, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **8** is a flow diagram illustrating a process for using the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **9** is a side elevational partially-hidden view of a message concealed within a self-exploration therapeutic assembly that resembles an onion, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **10** is a side elevational view of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **9** with a petal moved to a different orientation to expose the previously-concealed message, in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **11** is a perspective side view of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **1** with a user accessing a petal while the self-exploration therapeutic assembly resembles an onion in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. **12** is a perspective side view of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **11** with the petal in a changed orientation after the user has turned the petal inside-out in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

While the specification concludes with claims defining the features of the invention that are regarded as novel, it is believed that the invention will be better understood from a consideration of the following description in conjunction with the drawing figures, in which like reference numerals are carried forward. It is to be understood that the disclosed embodiments are merely exemplary of the invention, which can be embodied in various forms.

The present invention provides a novel and efficient self-exploration therapeutic assembly that resembles a first recognizable shape, e.g., an onion, before its use and a second recognizable shape, e.g., a flower, after its use. Embodiments of the invention provide a base that removably secures a plurality of layers/petals that can be individually removed to reveal a therapeutic message or exercise. In addition, embodiments of the invention provide a base that is able to receive the layers/petals in an orientation that is substantially opposite from their original orientation within the base, whereby the reverse orientation of the layers/petals causes the assembly to resemble a flower.

Referring now to FIG. **1**, one embodiment of the present invention is shown in a side elevational view. FIG. **1** shows several advantageous features of the present invention, but, as will be described below, the invention can be provided in several shapes, sizes, combinations of features and components, and varying numbers and functions of the components. The first example of a self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**, as shown in FIG. **1**, includes a base **102**. Coupled to the base **102** is a plurality of layers/petals **104***a-n*, where the number of layers/petals between "a" and "n" can be any number. Each layer/petal **104***a-n* is shaped so that when the plurality of layers/petals **104** *a-n* are coupled to the base **102** in a first orientation, the first orientation being illustrated in FIG. **1**, the plurality of layers/petals **104***a-n* together resemble an onion.

The following figures will be described in conjunction with the process flow chart of FIG. **8**. The process of FIG. **8** begins at step **800** and moves directly to step **802**, where a user removes a first layer/petal **104***a* from the base **102**. This step is illustrated in FIG. **2**, where the first layer/petal **104***a* is separated from the base **102**.

One embodiment of the base **102** is shown in the perspective view of FIG. **3**, where the base **102** is shown provided with a plurality of receiving areas **302***a-n* on an upper surface **301**, where the number of receiving areas **302** between "a" and "n" can be any number. In this embodiment, the receiving areas **302***a-n* are shown as simple slots formed within the base **102** and each receiving area **302***a-n* is shaped to accept a portion **406**, shown in FIG. **4**, of one of the plurality of layers/petals **104***a-n*. The receiving areas **302***a-n* are not limited, however, to slots. The receiving areas **302***a-n* can be raised areas that insert within recessed areas of the layers/petals **104***a-n*. The receiving areas **302***a-n* can also be structures that are neither raised nor recessed, for instance, magnets that magnetically receive and hold magnets of opposite polarity on the layers/petals **104***a-n*, VELCRO, and any other. The base **102** is also shown as including a plurality of receiving areas **304***a-n* on a side surface **303**, where the number of receiving areas **304** between "a" and "n" can be any number. The receiving areas **302***a-n* on the upper surface **301** and the receiving areas **304***a-n* on the side surface **303** face in different directions. That is, the receiving areas **302***a-n* on the upper surface **301** can be thought of as having a longitudinal axis that is along the direction in which its corresponding petal **104***a-n* would attach to the receiving area **302***a-n*. Similarly, the receiving areas **304***a-n* on the side surface **303** can be thought of as having a longitudinal axis that is along the direction in which its corresponding petal **104***a-n* would attach to the receiving area **304***a-n*. As will be described and shown, particularly, in FIG. **7**, the longitudinal axis of the receiving areas **302***a-n* on the upper surface **301** are in a different plane than the longitudinal axis of the receiving areas **304***a-n* on the side surface **303**.

In step **804**, the user reads a message **402**, an example of which is shown in FIG. **4**, that is provided on a first side **404** of the removed layer/petal **104***a*. The message can be anything, including pictures, symbols, and text that causes the user to think or ponder some thought, concept, question, memory, or the like. For example, the message can be stories, questions, prayers, metaphors, poems, exercises, thoughts, or anything else that causes a user to engage in thought and, preferably, some sort of self-exploration. As a more detailed example, the message could be "think back to something you did that made you feel proud," "think back to something you accomplished that made you feel successful," "do something today that causes someone to say 'thanks'," "do something today that you can tell someone about and feel proud," and many others. Messages that invoke episodes of self-exploration, as used herein, can include, among many others, messages that invoke thoughts about self-centeredness, self-deception, self-esteem, self-examination, selfishness, self-pity, self-respect, self-restraint, self-support, and self-will, self-

worth, just to name a few. Most messages can be generalized in categories that fit into groups that make a user feel or think of things that make them feel mad, sad, glad, lonely, angry, and hurt.

The message **402** can be printed directly on the petal **104***a*, printed on a piece of paper coupled to the layer/petal **104***a*, printed on an object coupled to the petal **104***a*, or any other way of attaching a message to the layer/petal **104***a*. The message can be printed on the petal **104***a* by the individual undergoing self-exploration during use of the assembly **100** to conduct self-exploration with, for example, a pen, marker, pencil, or other writing utensil. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the petal **104***a* is provided with an electronic display, such as an LCD screen, for example, that is able to display a message to the user. In accordance with another embodiment, as shown in FIG. **5**, a central display **502** is provided and the removal of one or more of the layers/petals **104***a-n* causes a message **504** to be displayed on the central display **502**. The central display can be, for example, an LCD screen on the base **102**. In this embodiment, a central processor coupled to a memory can provide a virtually unlimited number of messages **504** on the display **502** by following a computer program. Messages stored within the memory can be updated by connection to a computer or computer network, from which new messages can by downloaded. Each one of the plurality of receiving areas **302***a-n* can be provided with a switch that is coupled to the processor and causes the processor to display a message **504** on the display **502** in response to one of the layers/petals **104***a-n* being removed from its respective one of the plurality of receiving areas **302***a-n*.

In step **806**, the petal **104***a* is once again coupled to the base **102**, this time, in a second orientation that is different from the first orientation shown in FIG. **1**. As shown in FIG. **6**, the layer/petal **104***a* is coupled to one of the plurality of receiving areas **304***a-n* on the side surface **303**. The layers/petals **104***a-n* can also be coupled in the second orientation to one of the receiving areas **302***a-n* on the upper surface **301**. This process is repeated with a different one of the layers/petals **104***a-n* during one session or in multiple therapy sessions. By removing each layer/petal **104** and replacing it in the base **102**, eventually, the self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100** will no longer resemble the onion shape of FIG. **1** and will, instead, resemble a flower shape **700**, such as that shown in FIG. **7**. The term "flower shape," as used herein, is intended to indicate any object with petal-shaped features, where one petal-shaped feature has a dimension that extends in at least one direction different from a direction of a corresponding dimension of an adjacent petal-shaped feature. One such shape is shown in FIG. **7**. It should be noted that the present invention is not limited, however, to any specific flower shape. The term "onion shape," as used herein, is intended to indicate an object with a bulbous and somewhat smooth shape. One such shape is shown in FIG. **1**. It should be noted that the present invention is not limited, however, to any specific onion shape.

In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the flower shape **700** is formed by coupling a first group of the plurality of layers/petals **104***a-n* to the first group of the plurality of receiving areas **302***a-n* on the upper surface **301** of the base **102** and coupling a second group of the plurality of layers/petals **302***a-n* to the second group of the plurality of receiving areas **304***a-n* on the side surface **303** of the base **102**.

In accordance with yet another embodiment of the present invention, each layer/petal **104***a-n* is rotated substantially 180 degrees from its original orientation, which is shown in FIG. **1**. This rotation can include the petal **104***a-n* being turned upside down, being turned directly around to face the opposite direction, or both. In addition, in accordance with one embodiment, each layer/petal **104***a-n* is deformable so that its orientation is changed simply by substantially turning the layer/petal **104** inside out. In other words, the bulging center portion of the layer/petal **104** is pushed through the layer/petal **104** until it bulges out in the opposite direction. In yet another embodiment, the layer/petal **104** is provided with a hinged connection at the junction between the layer/petal **104** and the base. In this embodiment, the change of orientation from onion shape to flower shape includes a simply a rotation of the hinged connection from a first orientation to a second orientation. In yet another embodiment, the change from a first orientation to a second orientation is a simple deformation of the pliable bendable layer/petal **104**.

As the process carries on, and the user: (1) continues to remove layers/petals **104***a-n* from the base **102**, (2) reads the messages and, in some cases, (3) carries out the exercises indicated by the messages, the flower shape **700** begins to form, and the user will (4) feel a sense of accomplishment. This accomplishment, unlike the therapies of the prior art, is substantiated by physical evidence of progress along the user's journey into self-discovery.

Looking again to FIG. **8**, after the user replaces the layer/petal **104** in the base **102** in the second orientation, the flow moves to step **808** where it is determined whether or not all of the layers/petals **104***a-n* have been removed and replaced in the new orientation. If the answer is yes, the exercise is complete and the process moves to step **812**, where it stops. If the answer to step **808** is no, the process moves to step **810** where a determination is made as whether or not the user wishes to continue with the therapy session. If the answer is yes, the process moves back up to step **802**, where another layer/petal **104** is removed and process starts over. If, however, the answer to step **810** is no, the exercise is complete and the process moves directly to step **812** and stops.

In accordance with an embodiment of the present invention, the messages are in the form of paper removably coupled to one of the layers/petal **104**. Once the user reads the piece of paper, the user places the paper in an inventive "wish box" that is provided to accompany the inventive self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**. The wish box is any container that can receive and contain the completed messages. Advantageously, the user can later open the wish box and re-experience the messages, can send them to a processing station that exchange them with new messages, can trade them with a friend, or many other options. In addition to the flower shape of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**, the filled wish box represents an accomplishment achieved by the user, i.e., completion of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**.

Referring now to FIG. **9**, a self-exploration therapeutic assembly **900** includes a base **902**. Coupled to the base **902** is a plurality of layers/petals **904***a-n*, where the number of layers/petals between "a" and "n" can be any number. Each layer/petal **904***a-n* is shaped so that when the plurality of layers/petals **904** *a-n* are coupled to the base **902** in a first orientation, the first orientation being illustrated in FIG. **9**, the plurality of layers/petals **904***a-n* together resemble an onion. Inside the onion-shaped self-exploration therapeutic assembly **900** is a message **908**, illustrated with hidden lines.

As was explained above, a user **906** is able to reorient each of the petals **904***a-n* to reveal a plurality of the messages **908**. FIG. **9** shows that petal **904***a* has at least three orientations, **904***a***1**, **904***a***2**, and **904***a***3**. In this embodiment, the second

904*a***2** and third **904***a***3** orientations are simply a distortion of the petal from its original onion-resembling starting position **904***a***1**.

FIG. **10** provides a side elevational view of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly of FIG. **9** with the first petal **904***a* moved to a open orientation to expose the previously-concealed message **908**, in accordance with the present invention. In this embodiment, the message **908** is shown as being printed on a tangible medium, i.e., piece of paper that can be removed from the assembly **900** and read by the user. Because the message is on a tangible medium, the user **906** can keep the message, review it multiple times, save it, include it in a collection, share it, or many other uses. In one embodiment, the user can display the message on his/her social networking site, for example, as the user's "status." Once shared, other users can also enjoy the message, comment on it, or share it with their friends.

Although a physical model has been shown and described herein, the present invention can be equally embodied in a virtual model, such as one generated by a processor processing computer code and represented on a computer display. In a computer-generated embodiment, the user can remove a petal from a base by, for example, touching the petal on a touch-sensitive display screen. The computer code can then turn the petal and couple it to the base in a second orientation and then show a message to the user. Through the implementation of software, the possibility of displaying messages is greatly expanded, as virtually any size message in any format can be displayed through the combination of computer code and the display. In addition, new messages can be received at any time through software downloads via computer readable medium or network connections, such as the internet.

An assembly for facilitating self-exploration therapy has been disclosed that encourages a user to systematically follow a path of exploration by removing layers of an onion and replacing them in a slightly different orientation to reveal petals of a flower.

It is anticipated that various modifications, structural changes, and/or process step deviations may be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, although the exemplary embodiments described above with reference to FIGS. **1** through **12** are primarily directed to an onion shape and a flower shape, it is understood that other shapes can be implemented provided that a first shape resulting from a first orientation of the layers **104** is different from a second shape resulting from a second orientation of the layers **104**. The first and second shapes are preferably therapeutically symbolic shapes. The first shape can be considered a closed, compact, collapsed and/or folded configuration of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**. The second shape can be considered an open, expanded, and/or unfolded configuration of the sell-exploration therapeutic assembly **100**. Although the exemplary embodiments depicted in FIGS. **1** through **12** present a bulbous shape as the first shape, it is understood that other first shapes may be implemented, such as, for example, a circle, a cube, a cylindrical body, a dome, an elliptical shape, a polygon, a prism, a pyramid, a triangle, a rectangle, and the like. Accordingly, the second shape resembles an open, expanded, and/or unfolded configuration of the first shape. For example, if the first shape is a cube, the second shape may be an open configuration in which the cube sidewalls are folded outwardly. In this manner, the second shape may be considered to be dependent upon or derived from the first shape.

In another embodiment, the plurality of layers **104** may form an enclosure or covering in a first orientation. This enclosure or covering can resemble an onion, or any other compact shape. When the plurality of layers **104** are moved into a second, open orientation, a second body may be revealed. The second body may be separate from the plurality of layers **104**, the second body being housed within the enclosure or covering resulting from the plurality of layers **104** in the first orientation. The second body may be any shape. The second body preferably resembles a therapeutically significant shape or represents a therapeutically significant goal or message. For example, the second body can resemble a flower or other shape that symbolizes a desired therapeutic milestone. In this manner, physical manipulation of the plurality of layers **104** can assist with self-improvement and self-exploration of an individual in a meaningful way resulting in a positive and encouraging symbol or improvement and progression.

Although the exemplary embodiments described above with reference to FIGS. **1** through **12** present the layers **104** as resembling onion skin in the first orientation and flower petals in the second orientation, it is understood that the layers **104** may resemble other objects and shapes as well. The configuration of each of the plurality of layers **104** will depend on the desired first shape and the chosen segmentation of the first shape. For example, if the first shape is a cube, as described above, the layers may be segmented into a plurality of cube sidewalls. If the first shape is a pyramid, the layers may be segmented into a plurality of triangular panels. In another exemplary embodiment, the plurality of layers **104** can be a moveable membrane, i.e. any thin, pliable sheet or layer of material.

Although FIGS. **1** through **12** depict the plurality of layers **104** coupled to a circular shaped base **102**, it is understood that the base may be any size, shape, or configuration, such as, for example, a square or rectangular shape. The plurality of layers **104** may also be coupled to one another, rather than a separate base element. For example, each of the plurality of layers **104** may be coupled to one another at a bottom end of the layers **104**, such that a top free end of the layer **104** may be moved from the first orientation into the second orientation, such as, for example, by moving the layer **104** from an upright orientation outwardly into a horizontal orientation.

Each of the plurality of layers **104** may be comprised of various materials and exhibit various material properties. For example, the layers **104** may be rigid, flexible, living (e.g. live flower petal, as opposed to an artificial flower petal), artificial, resilient, and/or pliable. The layers **104** may be comprised of any material, such as, for example, a polymer material or paper, or the layers **104** may be a digital representation of a real-world object, as described above with reference to the computer-generated embodiment. In an embodiment where the message is printed on the layer **104** by the individual undergoing self-exploration, the layer **104** may be made of a writable material, i.e. a material that can be easily written on by common writing utensils, such as for example, a pen or a marker. The writable material may be comprised of a polymer or polymer-blend capable of receiving and retaining ink on its surface, without easily smudging. The writable material may further provide eraseability of the hand-written message. The layers **104** may be thin, thick, curved, rectilinear, planar, bulging, or any other configuration, provided that it is a segment or section of the self-exploration therapeutic assembly **100** that resembles a first shape when positioned in a first orientation with respect to the assembly **100**.

Each of the plurality of layers **104** may be coupled to the base **102** (or each other) in a multitude of ways. For example, the layers **104** may be coupled to the base **102** by a hinge connection, tongue and groove, snap fit, fastener, hook and

loop attachment, frictional engagement, adhesive, clip, clamp, hook, slot, tie, or the like.

Manipulation of the layers **104** from the first orientation of the layers **104** into the second orientation of the layers **104** may occur in a multitude of ways. The manipulation of the layers **104** is preferably performed manually, i.e. by hand, by the individual undergoing therapy. This manual manipulation can include the individual gripping the layer **104** with his or her fingers and manually moving the layer **104** from the first orientation to the second orientation, such as, for example, by removing a coupled layer **104** from the base **102** in the first orientation and re-coupling the layer **104** to the base **102** in the second orientation. It is understood that movement of the layers **104** from the first to the second orientation may occur by other methods, such as, for example, electronic computer commands in the computer-generated embodiment, or environmental manipulation in the form of heat directed toward the layers, which results in movement of the layers **104** into the second orientation. In another example, a chemical composition can be applied to the layers **104** resulting in movement from the first orientation to the second orientation. The layers **104** may be removed or uncoupled from the base **102** at the first orientation and repositioned and recoupled to the base **102** in the second orientation. In one embodiment, the layers **104** may be slideably removed from the base **102**. In another embodiment, the layers **104** may be forcibly pulled out of the receiving area **302** that is frictionally retaining the layer **104**. In yet other embodiments, the layers **104** may be unclipped, unclamped, unfastened, or untied from the base **102** and subsequently repositioned and recoupled to the base **102** in a respective like manner in the second orientation. In yet another embodiment, the layers **104** may be pivotally coupled to the base **102**, such that the orientation can be changed by pivotally rotating the layers **104** from the first orientation to the second orientation.

The devices and methods used in the present invention are preferably for assisting individuals in therapy, such as, for example, therapies to overcome addiction, depression, eating disorders, developmental disorders, behavioral disorders, and the like. The present invention may also be used for assisting individuals in general self-improvement, self-discovery, and personal or professional growth. For example, the present invention can be used as a creative tool for children, or a career development tool for corporate professionals.

Although a three-dimensional therapeutic object has been shown and described herein, the present invention can also be embodied in the form of a book, particularly, either a therapeutic workbook or a pop-up book. In the workbook embodiment, the process of self-exploration described above with reference to the three-dimensional therapeutic assembly **100** can be implemented on the pages of a book. For example, the first page of the workbook can include an image resembling an onion shape, formed of a plurality of layers coupled to a base. The second page can include an image resembling one layer peeled outward. A user can write a message on the peeled layer depicted on that page in the workbook. There can also be an area on the page to allow the user to write about the message for further reflection and exploration. The third page can include yet another image resembling a second layer peeled outward. The second page is similar to the third page, and each subsequent page, except that the image in each subsequent page includes an additional peeled layer. The last page in the workbook includes an image of each of the plurality of layers peeled outward so as to resemble a flower shape. This last page can include a perforated edge to allow the user to remove the last page in order to frame, or otherwise capture the flower shape image, as a reminder of new skills and behaviors learned from use of the therapeutic tool. Similarly, the present invention can be embodied in the form of a pop-up book. In the pop-up book embodiment, the onion shaped image from the first page (or the flower shaped image of the last page) may be a three-dimensional pop-up structure, rather than a two-dimensional image. As is known in the art, the pop-up structure is configured to unfold and open into a three-dimensional structure formed from the page when the pop-up page is opened. When the pop-up page is closed, the three-dimensional structure is folded inward and becomes flattened.

The present invention provides a novel device and method that allows individuals to explore areas of self-development by manipulating layers in one orientation, forming a first therapeutically symbolic shape, to another orientation, resulting in a second therapeutically symbolic shape, wherein the first shape includes a negative association (e.g. onion), representing a hardship or challenge, and the second shape includes a positive association (e.g. flower), representing a milestone or triumph.

What is claimed is:

1. A self-exploration assembly comprising:

a base; and

a plurality of layers, each coupled to the base and shaped so that when the plurality of layers are in a first orientation, the plurality of layers together are adjacent to each other in a closed configuration resembling a first recognizable object, and, when the plurality of layers are in a second orientation, the plurality of layers are apart and separate from each other in an open configuration resembling a second recognizable object of a category different than a category of the first recognizable object, wherein the first recognizable object is unrecognizable when the plurality of layers are in the open configuration resembling the second recognizable object, the plurality of layers being manually transitionable from the first orientation to the second orientation.

2. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein:

the first orientation is substantially between a 90 degree and a 180 degree rotation from the second orientation.

3. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein each of the plurality of layers is comprised of an ink-receivable material.

4. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein the base comprises:

a plurality of receiving areas, each receiving area shaped to accept a portion of one of the plurality of layers.

5. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **4**, wherein the base comprises:

an upper surface having a first group of the plurality of receiving areas; and

a side surface having a second group of the plurality of receiving areas.

6. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **5**, wherein the second orientation comprises:

a first group of the plurality of layers coupled to the first group of the plurality of receiving areas; and

a second group of the plurality of layers coupled to the second group of the plurality of receiving areas.

7. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **4**, wherein:

a first one of the receiving areas defines a first longitudinal axis; and

a second one of the receiving areas defines a second longitudinal axis, the second longitudinal axis being in a different plane than the first longitudinal axis.

8. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein:

each of the plurality of layers has a first shape when in the first orientation and a second shape different from the first shape when in the second orientation.

9. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein the first recognizable object is a bulb and the second recognizable object is a flower.

10. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **1**, wherein the first recognizable object is an onion and the second recognizable object is a flower.

11. A self-exploration assembly comprising:

a base; and

a plurality of movable membranes coupled to the base, each movable membrane shaped so that when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of movable membranes together are adjacent to each other and form a first recognizable object, and, when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a second orientation including the plurality of movable membranes apart and separate from each other, the plurality of movable membranes form a second recognizable object of a category different than a category of the first recognizable object, the first recognizable object being unrecognizable when the plurality of movable membranes are in the second orientation resembling the second recognizable object; and

wherein a transition from the first orientation to the second orientation is one movable membrane at a time.

12. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **11**, wherein:

the first orientation is substantially between a 90 degree and a 180 degree rotation from the second orientation.

13. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **11**, wherein each of the plurality of movable membranes is comprised of a writable material.

14. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **11**, wherein the base comprises:

a plurality of receiving areas, each receiving area shaped to accept a portion of one of the plurality of movable membranes.

15. The self-exploration assembly according to claim **14**, wherein the base comprises:

an upper surface having a first group of the plurality of receiving areas; and

a side surface having a second group of the plurality of receiving areas; and

wherein a first group of the plurality of movable membranes is coupled to the first group of the plurality of receiving areas and a second group of the plurality of movable membranes is coupled to the second group of the plurality of receiving areas.

16. A method of conducting self-discovery, the method comprising steps of:

providing an assembly comprising:

a base; and

a plurality of movable membranes coupled to the base, each movable membrane shaped so that when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a first orientation, the plurality of movable membranes together are adjacent to each other and form a first recognizable object, and, when the plurality of movable membranes are coupled to the base in a second orientation including the plurality of movable membranes apart and separate from each other, the plurality of movable membranes form a second recognizable object of a category different than a category of the first recognizable object, the first recognizable object being unrecognizable when the plurality of movable membranes are in the second orientation resembling the second recognizable object; and

manually moving a first one of the plurality of movable membranes from the first orientation to the second orientation one movable membrane at a time.

17. The method of conducting self-discovery according to claim **16**, wherein the step of manually moving further comprises the steps of:

selectively removing the first one of the plurality of movable membranes from the base; and

coupling the first one of the plurality of movable membranes to the base in the second orientation.

18. The method of conducting self-discovery according to claim **17**, wherein the step of manually moving further comprises the step of rotating the first one of the plurality of movable membranes from to first orientation to the second orientation.

19. The method of conducting self-discovery according to claim **16**, wherein each of the plurality of movable membranes is formed of a material configured to be written on with ink.

20. The method of conducting self-discovery according to claim **16**, further comprising the step of writing a message on a first side of the first one of the plurality of movable membranes.

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